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Rare

FIFTY PRINTS

1927

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF GRAPHIC ARTS

FIFTY PRINTS

EXHIBITED BY THE INSTITUTE

1927



AN INTRODUCTION

BY

ROCKWELL KENT

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

B Y

R O C K W E L L K E N T

It might be said that a too generous consideration is given by the press and by periodicals of art to painting, in that the costliness of paintings and the limited activity of our museums in that field of contemporary art restricts the possession and enjoyment of them to a privileged few. The possibility of ultimate possession is not to be lightly disassociated from the participation in any experience so intimate and stirring as those that life and art sometimes afford, and we may consider cost as a real factor in what popularity an art may achieve.

Granting that the cost of prints puts them within the reach of any purchaser, it should at the same time be realized that all prints, as they are here considered, are "originals" in the same precious sense as a unique painting, and that the various processes of making prints lend themselves to the most adequate expression of the artist's vision of beauty. In order that the art of print making may be more generally respected as an art of many

"originals," and that its many different forms may be accepted as of equal dignity we undertake a brief description of how prints are made.

A print is the finished original of a design of which the plate, stone, or block from which it is the impression represents—even when, completed, it leaves the hand of the artist—only one stage in the process of making the print. To maintain a standard of high quality in prints the editions are usually limited.

Prints may by their processes be divided into three classes of which the following types are best known: the etching, the lithograph and the woodcut.

The etching plate is of metal and the design is etched or eaten into the plate. The plate before printing is completely coated with ink; the ink is then wiped off the surface of the plate but left filling the etched lines. Then the plate is printed, the paper being slightly forced into the ink filled lines to receive the impression. The result is a print in which the

design appears in infinitesimal relief. That relief is characteristic of the engraving and the mezzotint.

Lithographs are printed from a stone or porous surfaced plate on which the design has been drawn, or transferred, in a greasy medium which is sympathetic to ink. The lithograph shows no relief or impression; it is flat.

Woodcuts, or wood block prints, are impressions from blocks the surface of which has been cut away to leave the black lines of the design standing. In wood block prints the design appears as slightly pressed into the paper. Linoleum prints are of the same nature.

One may say that, as far as art is concerned, all processes are equally difficult or simple. They each yield their proper and different results. And that the artist chooses at all to produce prints rather than drawings is in consideration both of the nature of the result and of the economic necessity of making many originals of one design. Print making is a democratic art.

As to the critical evaluation of prints: unless that can be done in such terms as may equally be applied to the consideration of painting and, in a less detailed sense, to all art, it could only serve to differentiate the art of print making from the, broadly speaking, intentional identity of all the arts of expression. And there, having by all experience been

most impressed by the close affinity of men in all they feel and all that they are moved to do, we are unwilling to venture. We have little patience with the precious critical approach to art which would discover the experience of it to be different in kind from the experience of life, and we regard the aesthetics of art as identical with the prevailing aesthetics of our universe which in their totality *are* that universe as the senses apprehend it.

Nor do we believe that the dissection of design into its aesthetic elements can add a candle power to its illumination. There's too much explaining of art. The less justifying of ourselves and others we indulge in the less we'll get encumbered with relationships that don't belong to us. If any problem exists between art and the public it's more the public's fault; and, presuming art capable in its turn of regarding the public and being interested in it, one might appropriately tender some explanation to the high serenity of art of the bewildered human stare that it encounters. Briefly, it is not art that needs explaining but the public mind; and as we may suppose it to be the aim of the psychologist to dispose the patient to a calmer acceptance of life, so the critic, rather than make a problem for himself of what is already an elucidation might better address himself to clarifying men's faculties of perception.

Of these fifty prints there are a few that I would love to possess, many that I like, some that I'm indifferent to, and several that to me are dreadful. There has been no intention, I must believe, on the part of either of the two distinguished judges to present their choice of prints as being in any absolute sense the *best* prints of the year. The groups stand as an expression, within prescribed limits, of the judges' taste. They are submitted for the personal re-evaluation of everyone who sees them. And in the scarcely more than technical difference that appears to separate the "modern" from the "conservative" group one may discover either unwillingness or inability on the part of the "modern" judge to make a clear distinction. It was both. He holds art to be essentially and properly untraditional, that it is liable or susceptible to any variation of form which the creator's genius may require; and that the occasional periodic resemblances which art assumes, and which are the basis of academic classification, are relatively unimportant; that, in other words, the manner of art is not essentially related to its content nor a matter properly of anyone's too serious concern.

It may be that the extremes of weakness or of senseless fashion which the art of every period persistently reverts to are the basis for

the popular division of art into "schools," for genius would appear to elude the yard stick. The *kinship* of genius, the essential likeness of its works of every period is more apparent and infinitely more significant than its alleged relationship at any time to the schools of its day; and it is as manifestly unfair to class a Ryder or a Winslow Homer with a school on which the banalities of a National Academy have put the stamp of character as to confuse Von Gogh and Picasso with their bewildered "modern" followers.

It is not for even the most qualified judge of art, if one can qualify to judge, to interpret the meaning of art or to assert that it essentially has meaning. We may be moved by beauty or conceive of it without a thought of what it signifies; and a perceived significance may still give out no hint of what.

To the prayer that those who may look at these Fifty Prints dispose themselves to the simple enjoyment of their qualities, we may add that with maybe no exception their language of expression should offer no problem to a simple and unschooled intelligence.

ROCKWELL KENT

3 Washington Square North
New York

FIFTY PRINTS



1. JOHN TAYLOR ARMS *La Mangia, Siena* ETCHING



William Auerbach-Levy inv.



3. GUSTAV BAUMANN *El Velorio* BLOCK PRINT





5. FRANCES GEARHART *Heart of the Canyon* BLOCK PRINT



6. ARMIN HANSEN *Fisher Harbor* DRY POINT



Alfred Hatty. 1851.



Charles B. Keeler



9. TROY KINNEY *Footlight* DRY POINT



10. VERNON T. KIRKBRIDE *The Gypsy Shawl* ETCHING



11. J. J. LANKES *The Lane* WOODCUT



Recreation Hour

Katharine Merrill. Plate II.



13. CHARLES L. MORGAN *Barcelona Wharf* DRY POINT





15. B. J. O. NORDFELDT *Man from Arroyo Hondo* ETCHING





George Resler int.



18. CHAUNCEY F. RYDER *Winter Brook* DRY POINT







21. DIANA THORNE *Pan of Puck's Hill* DRY POINT









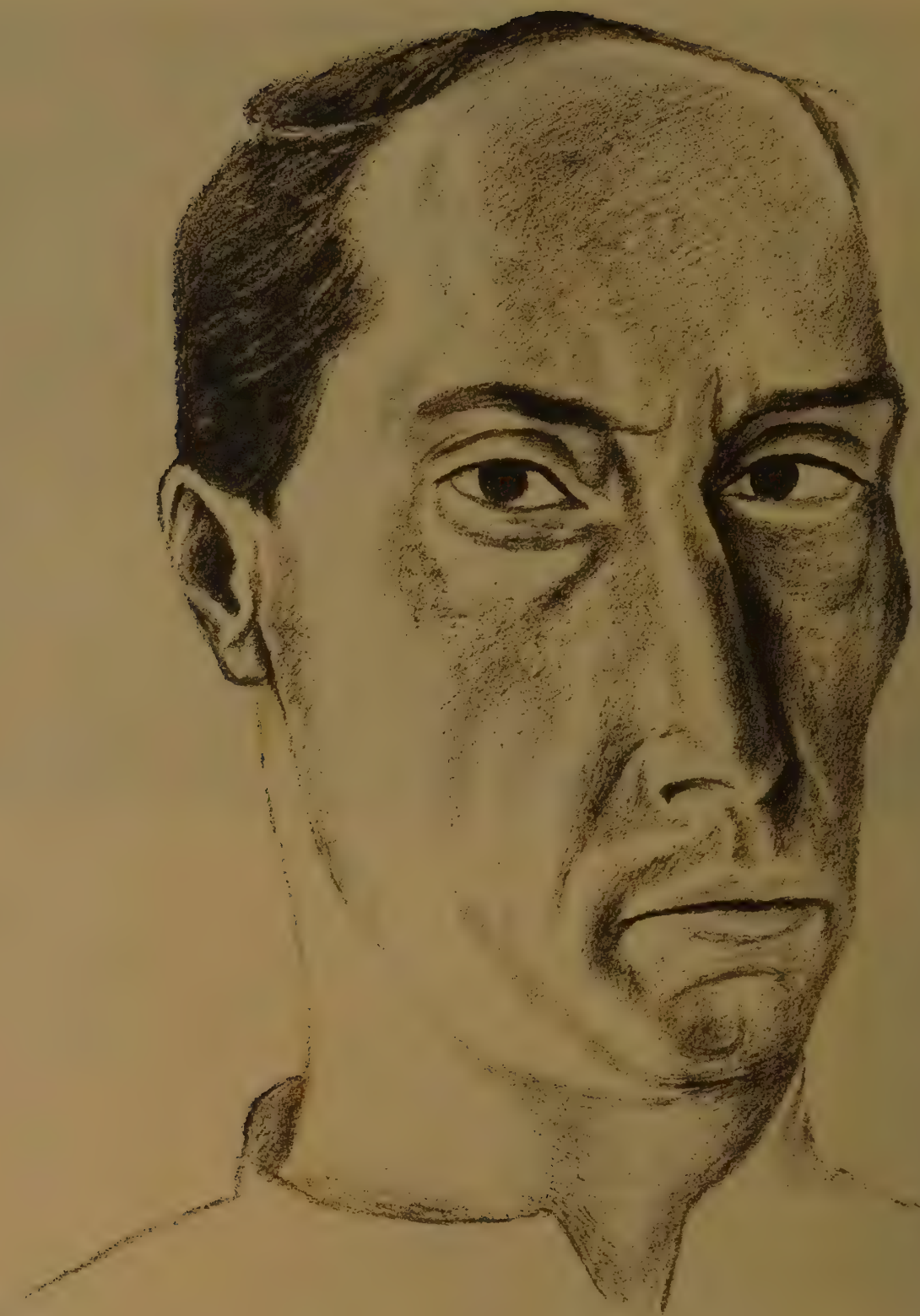


7-4/69 13-10-1900









V. Canale



31. HOWARD N. COOK *Boat Building* WOODCUT













E. Ganso









YASUO KUNIYOSHI 27.

GIRL LEANING AGAINST TREE



— Lois Lenski



43. CHARLES LOCKE *Portrait of a Banker* LITHOGRAPH





T. J. Sanger









49. HARRY WICKEY *The Jungle* ETCHING



W. Wolfson

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